



The Little House

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In The Snow



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Autumn came along. Rain began falling.
The wind blew. Rabbit got tired of freezing
out in the cold. He wanted to live indoors.
So, he went round the forest to look for
shelter.



He reached an old oak-tree and knocked on the bark. Once, twice. He asked:

'Anybody home? I am looking for a house!'

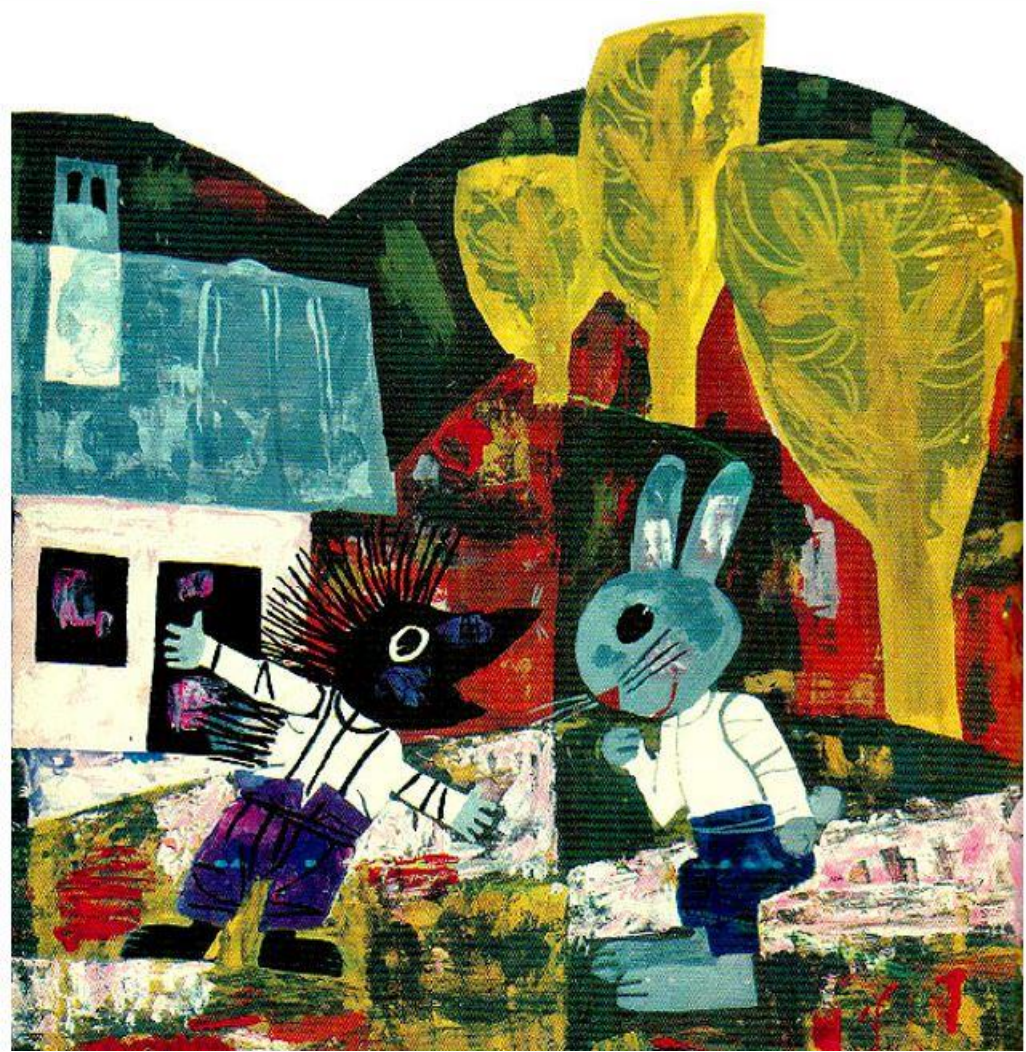
A little door opened and a small head showed. Squirrel thought a little and said:

'Make yourself a house in the oak-tree. You'll be my neighbour. We'll live together like friends!'



Rabbit followed his advice. He scratched with his claws, and nibbled away with his teeth, digging a hole to make himself a home in the oak-tree.

Suddenly, a Jay landed nearby, it saw Rabbit, and screamed. It gathered a hundred magpies. They attacked Rabbit and chased him away from the oak-tree.



Rabbit went sadly round the forest. He realized that it would not do to live in a tree. He would have to seek shelter elsewhere and find a hidden place, with no beasts, no enemies. He walked and walked, and found himself in front of a little house. He knocked at the door. Once, twice. He asked:

'Anybody home? I'm looking for a house!'

A Hedgehog came out. He invited Rabbit to look round his house.



It was warm and pleasant inside. There was no rain, or wind. One could sleep soundly. It was nice and comfortable: soft rugs, carpets and mattresses.

Hedgehog gave Rabbit something to eat. He advised him:

'Stay with me. We'll live like brothers, in peace!'



Rabbit stayed with Hedgehog. He lived with him a day, two, three days. On the fourth day the Vixen came. She broke through the door, breaking down the wall...

Hedgehog rolled into a ball, and covered himself with prickles. Rabbit bolted away like an arrow...



He hopped round the wood. He thought: 'This kind of house won't do for me, either. I have to look for a strong house. In a secret place, with no beasts, no enemies.'

A cave showed dark in front of him.

He knocked on the rock. Once, twice. He asked:

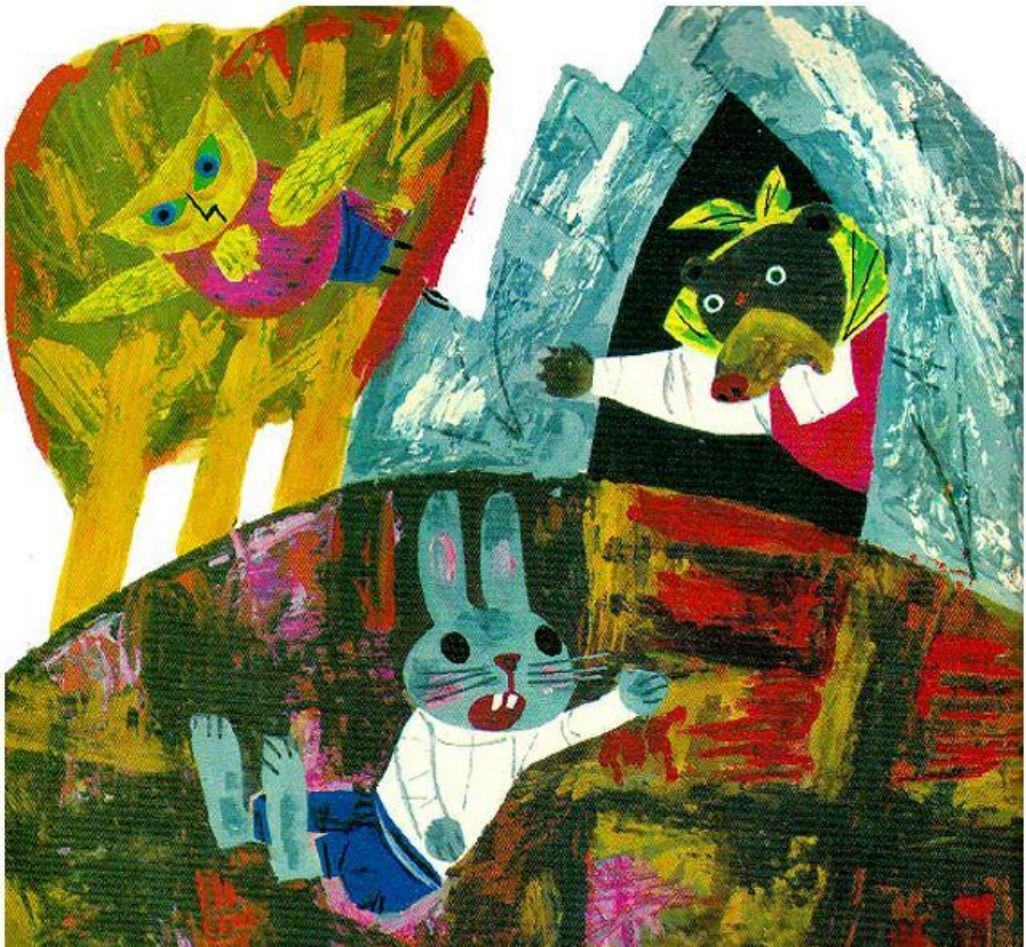
'Anybody home? I'm looking for a house!'

A voice called from within:

'Come in. Be my guest!'

The Owl blinked an eye. He listened to Rabbit wisely and replied:

'Stay with me. I live here all day!'



Rabbit stayed in the cave. He lived a day, two, three days. On the fourth day Bear came. He roared, waved his frightening paws, he shook his head. He chased them away and went to sleep...



Rabbit realized he could not live in a cave. He had to build a house of his own. In a secret place, with no beasts, no enemies. Rabbit walked and walked. Rain fell on him all through the night. Daybreak found him in the dale. He saw a strong house built into the bank.

He knocked on the wall. Once, twice. He asked:

'Anybody home? I'm looking for a house!'

A badger opened up. He listened to Rabbit. He scratched neck, then declared:

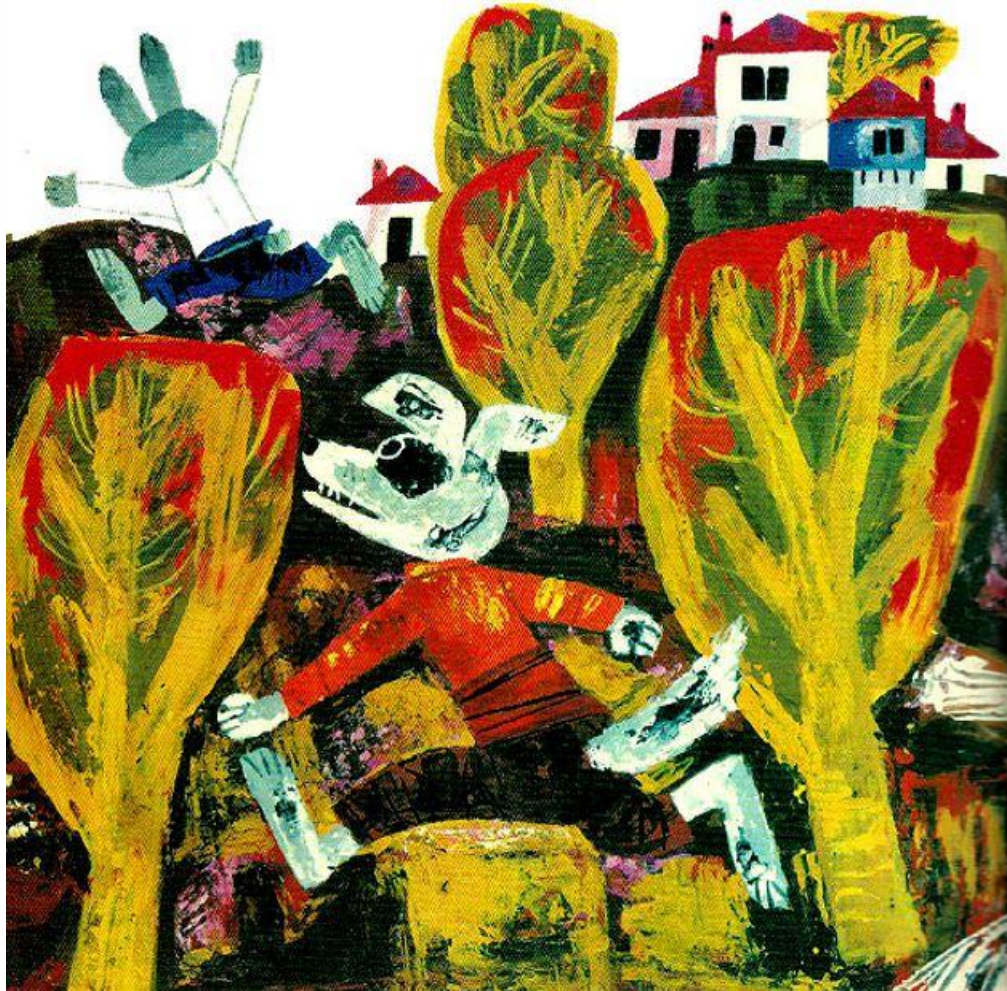
'Don't come in! Don't bring in dirt! Listen to my advice. Make yourself a house over there by the bank. Dig, then lay foundations. Drive in some posts and then build the walls!'



Rabbit followed Badger's advice. He got down to work. He built a little room, and opened a window. He raised a chimney and plastered the ceiling. He placed an old mushroom in the centre to serve as table and arranged some chairs, making his home comfortable. The Spider spun him a little curtain. The Forest Mouse wove him a carpet. The Woodpecker carved a clothes-peg and bored a lock in the door.



Rabbit lived happily. He lived a week, two, three weeks. But in the fourth week a misfortune happened, The Polecat, an old bandit, stole into the house. He attacked Rabbit in his bed. He broke his sleep and tore his ear.



Rabbit escaped, but remained without a house. He ran back to the forest. He thought and reasoned: 'A good thing Polecat entered and not the Vixen... I'll have to look for a secret place, with no beasts, no enemies.'

Suddenly he came across a little village.

Rabbit slunk up to a hedge, out of the rain. He looked and saw a hut behind the hedge. Nice and strong. He knocked at the door. Once, twice. He asked:

'Anybody home?'

A dog growled and barked. He chased Rabbit, ran after him over hills and dales. At last he grew tired of barking. He left him alone and came back to the village.



Winter came. Snow started falling. Everything went white. Rabbit remained homeless. He lay down under a thistle in the field. Freezing, he thought: 'Where shall I go? There are beasts and enemies everywhere.'

Clear enough – he was going to die! Rabbit wept a little, wept some more, then fell asleep under the thistle. He was so tired.

During the night the snow fell steadily. It buried the woods and the fields. It fell everywhere and buried the thistle. Rabbit woke up. What should he see around him but a little white house! He was lying inside. It had white walls and a white ceiling that no one had touched.

There was no table, chair, or stove. There was not even a door. But inside it was warm and light, there was no wind, no draught.



Rabbit was glad. He set to work. He made a door under the snow. He dug a hole in the roof. He fixed windows of ice. He forgot nothing. Then he made himself comfortable in his house. Nights he went round looking for food, mornings he came home. He hid his tracks, so that nobody would discover his house.

So, he lived till spring, in a secret place, with no beasts, no enemies...